

Baby and Child Care: Dr. Benjamin Spock - Humanist, Politician, Olympic Gold Medalist (1982)

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▫ Alternative Views

168. A CONVERSATION WITH DR. SPOCK (1982)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_Views

<http://tinyurl.com/65gr9sy>

Dr. Benjamin Spock's (humanist of a year, 1968) name became universally known after his book "Baby and Child Care" was published, selling 26 million copies and being translated into 26 languages. Dr. Spock also is famous for his anti-war struggles from the 1960s to the present. He reveals many little-known facts: why he wrote his book; how he became involved in the anti-war movement; his being sentenced to two years in jail; his relationship with Lyndon Johnson; why he is a socialist; and his experiences in running for US President.

▫ Dr. Benjamin Spock

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Spock

▫ The New Left

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Left

▫ Books by Benjamin Spock:

Baby and Child Care (1946, with revisions up to eighth edition, 2004)

<http://www.amazon.com/Dr-Spocks-Baby-Child-Care/dp/0743476670>

A Baby's First Year (1954)

<http://www.amazon.com/Babys-First-Reinhart-Benjamin-Spock/dp/B000EQ9D2G>

Feeding Your Baby and Child (1955)

<http://www.amazon.com/Feeding-your-child-Benjamin-Spock/dp/B0007FP9UE>

Dr. Spock Talks With Mothers (1961)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dr-Spock-Talks-Mothers-Benjamin/dp/B000GFGQB6>

Problems of Parents (1962)

<http://www.amazon.com/Problems-Parents-Benjamin-McLane-Spock/dp/0395082099>

Caring for Your Disabled Child (1965)

<http://www.amazon.com/Caring-Disabled-Child-Benjamin-McLane/dp/0026132508>

Dr. Spock on Vietnam (1968)

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/customer-media/product-gallery/B0006BT7ZM>

Decent and Indecent (1970)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Decent-Indecent-Personal-Political-Behavior/dp/B0026PW78K>

<http://www.amazon.com/Decent-Indecent-Personal-Political-Behavior/dp/B000RKVRS2>

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0370013344?tag=openlib-20>

http://openlibrary.org/books/OL9331686M/Decent_and_Indecent

A Teenager's Guide to Life and Love (1970)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Teenagers-Guide-Life-Love/dp/0671780840>

Raising Children in a Difficult Time (1974)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Raising-Children-Difficult-Benjamin-Spock/dp/0393011062>

Spock on Parenting (1988)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dr-Spock-Parenting-Sensible-Child-Care/dp/0671639587>
<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dr-Spock-Parenting-B/dp/0743426835>

Spock on Spock: a Memoir of Growing Up With the Century (1989)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Spock-Memoir-Growing-Up-Century/dp/0394578139>

A Better World for Our Children (1994)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Better-World-Our-Children/dp/0809231875>

Dr Spock'S Guide to the First Two (2001)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dr-SpockS-Guide-First-Two/dp/074341122>

Dr Spocks Baby and Child Care (2004)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dr-Spocks-Baby-Child-Care/dp/0743476689>

Dr. Spock's Baby and Childcare (2005)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Spocks-Baby-Childcare-Benjamin-Spock/dp/067102194X>

Run Time: 58:04

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when it was first about to be published I worried about how many children it would kill you know not because it gave definitely the wrong advice but or any kind of advice can be misunderstood and I was always trying to lean in the direction of reassuring parents very pleased that after 30 million copies have been sold and used that nobody's accused me of having killed a child the accusations that it corrupts youth that didn't come until 22 years after it was published and that came as a reaction to my opposition to the war in Vietnam and in 64 I was asked by Lyndon Johnson's campaign committee to support him on radio and television and I said I certainly would because Lyndon Johnson promised in that campaign he would not send American boys to fight in an Asian war those were his words whereas Barry Goldwater was threatening a destruction of Vietnam just wipe it off the face of the earth so I said certainly I'll support him as a citizen and as a pediatrician and as a spokesman for the disarmament movement and I did enough so that he called me up two days after the election to thank me and he said dr. Spock I hope I proved worthy of your trust no idea that he'd prove only unworthy of my trust as far as as far as Vietnam was concerned and then you see I'd been a Liberal Democrat from the time I was in medical school until the Vietnam War began but those experiences radicalized me I realized our government and its foreign policy is more often than not aggressive that it's trying to extend the power of our armed services or trying to extend the markets of our

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or trying to extend the markets of our industries in other words it's the government is not working as much for the welfare of the American people as its working for the for industry and for its own power so I became a radical and and I became a socialist and that famous dr. Benjamin Spock is with us tonight on alternative views in October of 1982 we had the great privilege of interviewing dr. Benjamin Spock one of the world's truly great people that interview is as relevant today as it was back then but before we have our interview with the author baby in child care here are some news stories which we have gleaned recently from the alternative press the extra copy of July and August is mostly about rush limbaugh and all the lies that he's been vomiting on the american people all these years but there is a small article written by the editor of extra and it's about the

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the editor of extra and it's about the single-payer health plans such as they have in and up in Canada they said the mainstream media have just been dismissing this plan even though it's been introduced in Congress two McDermid Wellstone single-player proposal is there the mainstream media say well it's politically unrealistic and they're not even talking about it but the people in fair the fairness and accuracy in reporting have examples both personal and corporate would show how the single-payer system would actually benefit the American people using them as an example for instance the company last year fair paid thirty nine thousand over thirty nine thousand dollars in medical premiums for their private insurance company to cover ten employees but because in these insurance premiums have written so much in the past few years they can't afford to cover half-time employees but under the single-payer national health insurance plan fair would pay no private premiums but instead of 4% tax on their total payroll of three hundred and seventy thousand dollars now this health tax would have mounted to twelve hundred or twelve thousand two hundred eighty dollars so that means that they would have saved twenty six thousand nine hundred seventy-five dollars last year because they paid thirty nine thousand in premiums whereas the tax for the single-payer system would have been a little over twelve thousand and then the editor says his family of three paid seven hundred and thirty two dollars in 1973 to medical practitioners deductibles co-payments and costs not covered by insurance 732 but if they'd had the single-payer system with a 2.1 percent income tax to finance it the tax would have come to four hundred and ninety five dollars compared to the 732 they paid in all

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compared to the 732 they paid in all these non covered costs and the publisher who gave birth in nineteen ninety three her family of three paid out more than two thousand dollars in deductibles co-payments and uncovered cost but under the single-payer plan they would have had to pay only 585 dollars in tax so the the

mathematics is there the single-payer system is much better for it the total American people but it's not good for the insurance companies and they're the people who buy and the politicians Frank there's an analysis of post-mortem actually of the failure of the Clinton health care reform program to make it through Congress in in these times on September the fifth that basically criticizes Clinton for failing to have a better program and selling it to the American people and in particular Clinton himself failing to pick up on something like a single single pay payer plan that would guarantee to every American good health insurance and that would pay for it through some sort of public taxation or financing Clinton's failure to really come up with a good plan was what was responsible according to David Moberg for the failure he indicated that there really was a climate where health care reform could have gone through that no one initially indicated that there was not a health care crisis everyone saw that this was an appalling system where large numbers of people are not covered by health care in this country where there's out-of-control costs with hospitalization and doctors fees and insurance fees are getting out of control everyone realized something needed to be done when over there seemed to be the political climate and will to actually do something about it Harris Wofford made health care reform the

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Wofford made health care reform the central issue of his 1991 Pennsylvania Senate race and engineered a stunning upset he won against great odds because he said health care is the key issue and he was going to work for that to guarantee the American people health care programs and initially no one was really attacking Clinton's program except for some small businesspeople and some right idiot likes but Clinton never really developed a good program that could be sold to the American people none of the grassroots activist groups that were going for health care reform could embrace Clinton's program one they didn't know what it was because it was done by his wife and others behind closed doors and it was just too complex and esoteric to really explain to the American people mainly because Clinton didn't want to offend the insurance lobbies and the American Medical Association and the other groups in the medical lobbies and just basically dropped the ball and the opponents were able to organize against it and thus defeat his program and now it's not clear that we'll have any health care reform here's just a wee insight into how the system works when it comes to pressuring Congress and the media to toe the line and not bring out the other proposal they which is so popular with Americans and is actually working very well up in Canada the single-payer system extra reports that Cokie Roberts who's a biggie on NPR and ABC she received a reported \$20,000 for speech which she gave to the group Health Association of America which is an alliance of HMOs \$20,000 for a little

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alliance of HMOs \$20,000 for a little speech how many of you make that much in a year and then CBS News star Lesley Stahl received close to \$20,000 for moderating a 90-minute panel discussion for the healthcare Leadership Council which is an alliance of insurance and drug companies and HMOs so these boys know how to play they know how to play the Congress they know how to play the media make sure that everything goes right labels @ly that's the title of an article by Ben Lewiston in the 1993 multinational monitor magazine where a us-based multinational pharmaceutical companies that peddle drugs to third-world countries often fail to provide the correct information that physicians need to administer these drugs safely and effectively to their people congressional office of Technology Assessment or the OTA did some examinations of these labeling practices according to the OTAs discoveries two-thirds of a random sample of 241 drugs that are marketed by us-based multinational pharmaceuticals failed to provide appropriate medical information to these third world country physicians the OTA evaluated the medical appropriateness of drug labeling in four countries Brazil Kenya at Panama and Thailand typical of the problems found by the OTA were the following the first a synthetic version of the male hormone testosterone was recommended for treating women for frigidity and benign breast conditions it was also used to suppress production of breast milk and to relieve menopausal symptoms the company provided inadequate evidence that the drug is effective for these conditions and the label failed to warn about serious side effects on this potentially dangerous drug a second finding was that a drug for relief of pain and inflammation was recommended for a number of minor ailments such as

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for a number of minor ailments such as headaches without mentioning potential side effects of the drug including the complete shutdown of the body's production of white blood cells and this could lead to fatal complications this drug is no longer on the US market he said it's very interesting that they would have this article because about oh about nine or ten years ago there was an article in the left press which indicated that this was extremely rampant and that there are so many drugs that are illegal and harmful in the United States they are being shipped overseas where third-world countries are actually using these things it was called the corporate crime of the century a third finding of the OTA was of a label of a magnesium containing antacid which instructed the user to regularly add the product to an infant formula and this was used to prevent milk from showering and from forming curds in the baby's stomach it was also used a digestion and to prevent constipation in healthy babies the company provided no evidence to support these it uses and the labeling did not warn of the danger of magnesium overdose in the children the OTA study did not identify the drugs or drug companies involved in the study by name representative Henry Waxman who is a Democrat from California and Senator Edward Kennedy who was a Democrat from Massachusetts released the OTAs findings in May they both asserted that a listing of the drug products and the countries of sale should now be made available to the public in these times has an article in the September 6th issue that talks about how corporate America is playing a bigger and bigger role in trying to influence the political process and intervening with new grassroots strategies to try to control the political environment even more than they have in the past they indicated that recently IBM

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indicated that recently IBM vice-chairman Paul Rizzo wrote a letter to the companies 110,000 employees urging them to join a grassroots campaign to defeat the democratic Democrats health care program previously IBM had stayed out of politics and certainly hadn't involved themselves in a corporate level where they try to organize their employees to take a certain political stand but this is the new corporate strategy according to n these times there was a recent conference and annual back to grassroots meeting that was organized by the public relations Council which is an influential network of corporate public affairs officers that were trying to persuade corporations on the need to get involved in the political process to organize their employees reward their employees for getting more involved in grassroots politics the first aim of this program according to the article it was for the corporate indoctrination to take place of all the employees actually this has been going on for some time in some corporations I once lived next to an executive for AT&T who was constantly being taken to these different basically indoctrination meetings or camps where they'd read all this right-wing literature and all the management and employees were indoctrinated as to what politicians or policies they should support what their political thinking should be and the like but now the corporation's are trying to organize not just their managers to indoctrinate them but all the way through the different sessions of the corporation secondly they're engaged in this corporate Leninist strategy whether organizing cadres small numbers of corporate employees who will infiltrate grassroots organizations and

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infiltrate grassroots organizations and try to push them to supporting the policies that the corporation wants supported and then they also have a key contact program where corporate employees will connect themselves with politicians keep in touch with them pressure them etc previously on the higher corporate levels the corporation presidents would give money to politicians and there'd be corporate lobbying that they're now trying to encourage their middle and other level aslong employees to involve themselves in grassroots activism as soldiers this is a quote whose loyalty is essentially essential for victory in today's competitive environment and these corporations were told to reward their employees who are successful grassroots activists so watch out because the corporation's may more and more try to influence public opinion on every level from local elections and local issues to national ones through this new corporate strategy and now for our interview with dr. Spock how many of you in the audience have been touched some way or another directly or indirectly by dr. Spock no Doug you were a dr. Spock baby and I raised my

children dr. Spock and no telling how many millions and millions others all around the country his famous book was ran in 25 million copies I believe it was and is translated into 25 different languages what dr. Spock is going to be with us tonight on alternative views and also a lot of maybe not very well known aspects about dr. Spock I think you'll find it fascinating there are few people in the world or even world history that you can

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world or even world history that you can just say their last names and you'll know automatically who they are you don't need any more there that statue you may think of Einstein and Freud and dr. Spock how many of you folks out there either raised your children and the Spock Ian Manor or were raised in such a way may Henson millions but dr. Spock is a significant person in the history of the United States right Doug not only in child care but in other fields dr. Spock has been active in anti-nuclear groups like sane for many years he was a prominent spokesperson for the Vietnam War he's one of the first anti-war spokespersons I heard when I was a student at Columbia University and has continued to be politically active through the years we want to discuss all of these things with him but we thought we'd start off with discussing your theories of child care which is what got you famous and made you an personality and national figure in the first place could you reflect a little bit on your book that you published first in 1946 it's called baby and child care and has gone through several editions how did your theory of child care differ from more traditional theories and over the years how have you modified that that's quite an order I never thought of it as a theory I can tell you where I got my ideas in the first place I was brought up very sternly and strictly by a New England couple especially my fiercely moralistic and though some people have said I suppose this book as a protest against the way you were brought up well that's only about a third of it I think that my interest in children devotion to children and that was of my sisters and brother were all because my mother was real totally devoted to her children so I think that's part of where I got launched from I cared a lot about their children but I think I also thought there were must be easier ways more

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there were must be easier ways more pleasant ways to bring children and the rather severe oppressive way that my mother used I had pediatric training after Medical School and then I thought I've got to get some psychological training no other pediatrician had gotten out and stayed in pediatrics so I found there was no place to get this training so I took a years residency in psychiatry New York Hospital that was occupied taking care of patients with schizophrenia and manic depressive psychosis this gave me nothing with which to add some others questions about thumb-sucking and toilet training and resistance to weaning but I did discover during that years residency that it was a psychoanalytically trained to people who were able to make the discussion of patients stories dynamic so I said I want psychoanalytic training so that year that I started pediatric practice in New York at the bottom of the depression in 1933 I started in my own personal now assess and then for five years took seminars the New York psychoanalytic Institute this this explains my Freudian my basically Freudian concepts and actually anyone who knows Freud reading through baby and child care sees Freud popping up again and again now in Freud's words with labeled the Freud they're the more positive things that you got out of fraud Freud was interested in where is the origin of neuroses I was interested in the other side of it how do children grow a moat and I think Freud has given us very good explanation of the stages of development but it took me 10 years before I could reconcile my Freudian concepts with what

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reconcile my Freudian concepts with what mothers were telling me my Freudian training didn't tell me it told me that sometimes you get into terrible conflicts with a child of a toilet training but when I asked my psychoanalytic colleagues well when should you start toilet training they shrug their shoulders because of course they didn't know they only knew the sour side of it so I had to work out with the help of dozens and dozens of mothers what is the application I'd give them the best advice I could on the basis of my theoretical background and then the next time they bring the baby in a month later I'd say how did how'd it work and I

was constantly having to revise my idea of what is the practical thing to tell parents and what is the relationship between that and a theory this was shown by the fact that five years after I started practice doubleday the publisher came to me and said we would like you to write a book on child care this wasn't because I was well-known I was completely unknown but they had asked questions around in New York and found that I was the only pediatrician there with some training I told him I don't know enough I was I was not being modest or falsely modest I really didn't know enough of the answers pocketbooks came ten years after I started practice the editor there said he was a droll fella he said doesn't have to be a very good book he said at 25 cents a copy we are going to be able I wasn't insulted at all I think first of all the idea of reaching a hundred thousand people per year that seemed very worthwhile to me was basically a do-gooder I think the other thing was that I was a perfectionist and if he said we want this to be the best damn book that's ever been written how I said I'm not sure that I could deliver that but if he says doesn't matter I said

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but if he says doesn't matter I said sure go ahead and try in other words after 10 years I thought I'd made enough connections between theory and practice so I went ahead and wrote it and how many how many lives that's the incredible thing how many lives have you touched for that I don't know there are all kinds of scary things if you want to raise questions like that there was some very simple ones when it was first about to be published I worried about how many children it would kill you know not because it gave definitely the wrong advice but or any kind of advice can be misunderstood and I was always trying to lean in the direction of reassuring parents the easiest thing in the world for a doctor or for doctor writing a book is too scared of achievers out of people and the previous books on child care all were along the general lines look out stupid if you don't do exactly what I say you'll kill your child at least make your child very sick I was leaning a little bit backwards always to be reassuring but this dangers in being too reassuring a lot of parents are too anxious with the first child but by the time they have the third they're remarkably casual I was scared anyway I'm very pleased that after 30 million copies have been sold and used that nobody's accused me of having a child the accusations that it corrupts youth that didn't come until 22 years after it was published and that came as a reaction to my opposition to the war in Vietnam I think that it was a purely political act it wasn't it one of the presidents who said that that we wouldn't have these demonstrations in the street and Spock hadn't damaged a generation children the worst accusers the man who went all over the United States was Spiro Agnew turned out to be a common crook and he had the nerve to tell the American people that I'd corrupted the youth well several people did argue that you offered more

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did argue that you offered more permissive practices of child rearing and that created a more anti-authoritarian generation that question more that against Authority more and that this was part of the reason for the flower children in the 1960s the anti-war movement the feminist movement and all of these different movements like I stopped on city streets and in airports by people who come up recognized me and thanked me for writing the book that helped them raise two fine children then they often add and I don't see that it's permissive and I think that's right it isn't permissive I'm incapable of giving permissive advice if by permissive you mean let them have anything they want and let them do anything they want I very much like children and who are polite who are cooperative and I raised my own that way when my sons are interviewed by the press of course the poor things are always asked no what was it like being a child of your father and they both sober up right away and say oh he was a stern father no I think it was if by permissive you mean understand what motivates children and tried to use that motivation to help them to grow up to become more mature more responsible it's permissive in this sense but not in the sense that most people use it which means brats simply it demeans brats let it all hang out let it hang out and now I think that if you want to be serious about it I think I might have had just a little bit to do with the independence of those anti-war young people during the Vietnam War period because you see what I was saying to parents is you don't have to grab your child from birth and begin molding him sternly right from the beginning children want more than anything else in the world to grow up that's why they practice adult activities all day long they're trying to grow up and be more

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they're trying to grow up and be more like their parents and your job is to guide them because they're inexperienced and they're impulsive but they will do nine-tenths of the work and I think what it did was relaxed parents and get them to feel well the child in general is going to try to turn out well if we do a reasonably good job and to put in another way I think parents didn't have to coerce their children or more specifically intimidate their children I was constantly intimidated by my mother made me feel guilty when I used to come home from school or come in from playing I cringed as I came in the house well my mother scold me about what have I done wrong I hadn't done anything wrong but I always felt as if I'd done wrong well I think that my book helped parents not to intimidate their children and the result was children when they grew up to be youth and decided that the war was an entirely wrong war unconstitutional illegal full of war crimes they have perfect confidence in just making that decision for themselves I found it to my own distress when I was a professor at the Western Reserve Medical School a couple of years before I had to retire for age I tried to intimidate the first-year class because a third of the class was coming late this was inconceivable at the time that I went to medical school I tried several occasions to intimidate them I finally funded them at them a little and I said I meant at last two weeks ago when I said please come on time or don't come at all I I raised goose brush on my own spine I because it's so unseemly for a professor to be thundering at students and didn't it scared me to hear myself doing it didn't scare them at all just as many came late just as many brought coffee just as many slumped down during

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coffee just as many slumped down during the lecture sipping their coffee you can't intimidate them those are sparking kids you know I think considering the terrible state of the country in the terrible state of the world I think it's great but there are young people who can't be intimidated can't be made planet I think the only thing that I feel badly about is that that spirit of Independence didn't last you know I asked teachers and high schools and colleges now what are your students like and they said all very docile the horrible conforming they just want to get good grades and go on and get a good job so obviously I didn't make any deep dent and the young another reason for not accusing me of corrupting a whole generation was that all the conservative youths that did go to Vietnam and never protested they were raised by my brother dr. sparke some people have claimed that you change radically your child-rearing methods and theories over the years his is true of you basically start to say that with them that was a complete misunderstanding a press report went out from Redbook magazine boosting one of my articles and it was poorly expressed and it was misinterpreted especially by those people who assumed that I was a permissive is that I was that i turned against permissiveness I never was a permissive estándar turned against it though I've changed my mind about how to help mothers breastfeed and about inoculations and things like that and those have grown into the revisions and then also tried to get rid of the sexism and that was part of the book in the beginning I'd never have changed my basic feeling that children are very decent people there to start with that they are trying to become a more mature and the parents job is to give them guidance to give them respect but

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them guidance to give them respect but to ask for respect that problem I mean this this is where parents some parents have gotten into trouble they're so ashamed of the abuse of children and the oppression of children in past periods that they jump to the opposite extreme and have the feeling parents are apt to do the wrong thing children are right and they almost become apologetic to their children or submissive but to their children respect children but ask for respect from them and that's the hard thing for many people to do well dr. sparke during the 1950's you became a household word and a word America because of your child carrying and rearing techniques then suddenly you became a political figure during the 1960's the beginning of this was your entrance into sane was it not what led you to become concerned about nuclear weapons and to join that group that was opposing it was purely a pediatric issue as far as I was concerned that the director of saying had twice invited me to join in the previous three years and I told him no I don't know anything about fallout I'm I've always been a reassure of parents I don't want to start in scaring parents about

radiation he very smartly came back a third time and said he still thought that I ought to be part of the committee and I was finally convinced that if we don't have a test ban treaty and that was the issue that Sain was particularly concerned about them test ban treaty to be negotiated between the United States and the Soviet Union we don't have that more and more children around the world will die of cancer and leukemia or be born with mental and physical defects as a result of fallout radiation from fallout so I joined saying it became co-chairman a year later and had to become a spokesman for disarmament but I saw it

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spokesman for disarmament but I saw it as a pediatric issue wasn't the medical evidence accumulating during that period that indeed the fallout from the tests were causing cancer Barry commoner wrote a book and I think 1959 science and common sense the documented this in a popular way right as the years have gone by the experts on radiation of kept having to revise their standards down and down in the sense of finding that less and less radiation is harmful to human beings and that come to the conclusion there is no part no amount of radiation so small that it doesn't affect at least a few individuals and that's why I've become not only an opponent of nuclear weapons but of nuclear power too we still can't say that it's safe to allow nuclear power plants to exist and to be leaking very small amounts of radiation constantly and that's what they're all doing dr. Spock it was quite a jump then just from that medical aspect to being anti-war in the Vietnam era what caused you to jump that - but the link there was that I joined saying in 62 and in 64 I was asked by Lyndon Johnson's campaign committee to support him on radio and television and I said I certainly would because Lyndon Johnson promised in that campaign he would not send American boys to fight in an Asian war those were his words whereas Barry Goldwater was threatening a destruction of Vietnam just wipe it off the face of the earth so I said certainly I'll support him as a citizen and as a pediatrician and as a spokesman for the disarmament movement and I did enough so that he called me up two days after the election to thank me and he said dr. Spock I hope I proved worthy of your trust I had no idea that

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worthy of your trust I had no idea that he'd prove only unworthy of my trust as far as as far as Vietnam was concerned and ice I can still remember saying Oh President Johnson of course you'll be worthy of my trust he only waited three months from November 64 until first week of February 65 when he suddenly started the bombing of North Vietnam and the build-up of fighting troops that eventually reached a half a million I was horrified and I was outraged and this was just well I became more and rapidly I became more and more active accepted more and more invitations to speak against the war which I saw as totally abominable in ebony in every way there was no redeeming feature to it at all was there something big that happened there's another big bridge across from opposite from disagreement to active opposition and particularly civil disobedience was there something dramatic that happened there was just a gradual escalation well in one sense it was a gradual escalation I think that certainly Lyndon Johnson starting the bombing was the first shock and outrage that I got that precipitated me into much more action and then three years later I was I am there three other people for other people including the chaplain of the Yale University were indicted by the Johnson administration they said for conspiracy to counsel aid and abet resistance to the military draft I was just trying to stop the war in Vietnam by telling the American people work against it tell the president tell your Senators tell your Congressman we were tried we were convicted we were sentenced to two years in jail fortunately a year later the Federal Court of Appeals reversed the decision so I didn't have to serve any time on

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so I didn't have to serve any time on that rap though I did for the first time in my life experience the inside of a jail I spent a night in jail six or eight that times as a result of civil disobedience demonstrations when I first heard of civil disobedience and as a weapon to to use against the war that scared me I was brought up to be extremely law-abiding as a child I was terrified of the cop on the block though I never did anything wrong I never did ride my bike on the sidewalk I never dared go out and Halloween so it was a really a tremendous

distance for me to commit the civil disobedience even to be in demonstrations was very embarrassing at first I cringed and reporters would come up and shove a microphone in my face and say have you been protesting in the Soviet Union has been doing and when I heard about other people committing civil disobedience I'd get goose flesh right away and think that's not for me I'm that may be counterproductive but as the years of opposing the war went on and I saw that civil disobedience was drawing attention to the outrage was convincing a lot of people that that it was the wrong war I was willing to do civil disobedience also but I must say it was painful the first couple of times some of the forms of civil disobedience what was your first act of civil disobedience what are some of the other sitting down in New York City on the steps of the induction Center it was purely symbolic we got together with the police department beforehand and we had a talk with the mayor about it and it was all agreed that was purely symbolic and there were about 2,000 demonstrators in New York City that morning five o'clock in the morning if you're going to be there when the inductees come in it's five o'clock in the morning it was it

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five o'clock in the morning it was it wasn't even light yet I can still remember how scary it was there were five thousand cops there surrounding the induction Center in 2000 well-intentioned demonstrators and I could tell you a long story about trying to climb over the barricades trying to crawl under the barricades finally finding a in the barricades to get in and just sit down on the steps of the induction Center it was symbolic obstruction to the war machine to the war machine and then the cop comes up and says if you don't remove yourself I'll arrest you and you pretend you don't here and he just takes you by the elbow and escorts you to the paddy wagon and off you go to jail and it's the it's the boredom of jail hour after hour after hour nothing to read nothing and just a frozen salami sandwich to eat after you've been there about eight or ten hours well it's not a terrible suffering to spend the night in jail but I often wonder how anybody could stand it for a week let alone a year or ten years you had you made attempts to get through to and talked with LBJ again did you not either orally or in writing and also with Humphrey also did you know I I wrote that many letters to Johnson pointing out not only that the war was wrong from every point of view but that it was unwinnable I think I had a bit of a nerve to be so absolutely sure it was unwinnable I said it was unwinnable because the French had found it unwinnable I tried to fight the Vietnamese for eight years and were ignominiously defeated and I thought that probably pointed the finger toward us too well I wrote letters accusing him of not only illegalities and authorizing war crimes

[00:42:03 \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF20rgdd0RI&t=2523s\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF20rgdd0RI&t=2523s)

illegalities and authorizing war crimes but also telling them you know if you go on with this the American people will turn more and more against it you'll end up by turning the country over to the Republicans I thought that would get to him even if the illegality didn't he respond to any of these oh the trouble was of course that an assistant would always answer most often McGeorge Bundy who was a pretty high assistant and I think the president would have done well to leave my letters unanswered because the letters from McGeorge Bundy were the most condescending and therefore the most irritating letters that I've ever gotten in my life general spirit of all of them was my dear doctor you may be sure we thought about what you're talking about but we found that it's without demerit yours sincerely and I'd sit down and write another letter to the president and finally I wrote one with an enclosed note to Jack Valenti who as one of his assistants saying mr. Valenti will you put this letter on his desk so that if he wants to he can read it I want to know that the president knows how I feel about what he did to the people who voted for him it's the peace candidate that did it I got a note from the President himself I'd accused him of 10 crimes and one of them I didn't have solid ground and he picked up that tenth one there was a woman at the non winnable one because he couldn't prove that it was winnable but I said that he sprung that on the country by bombing North Vietnam and he pointed out that he'd threatened a retaliation both at the Associated Press convention in April of 64 and that in the Tonkin Gulf Resolution of the summer of 64 that he'd threatened retaliation so he added me I was a little bit embarrassed to have over over reached myself in the

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have over over reached myself in the accusations but I noticed that he didn't touch the other two six well and then what about Hubert Humphrey it looked like there was a chance that he might he would have the opportunity to wind down the war but he didn't what kind of a person was he not to well I have cost thought that Hubert Humphrey who I'd always believed was fairly strong liberal would be opposed to the war and after I couldn't get to the president with my letters I wrote to Hubert Humphrey that I'd met on a number of times in the past sort of hinting around that wasn't it terrible what the president was doing to himself to the American people and to the Democratic Party and I was rather shocked I think he would have done better not to answer my letter of course he couldn't say Spock you're right there Lyndon Johnson is wrong but he could have at least said I can understand your distress or something like that but he wrote me back a total justification for the war and this was quite a shock to me because in a mild way he was a hero of mine was his relationship with Johnson was was it so was he under such control or intimidation by Johnson that he couldn't break out later when he was running well I thought that was the strangest thing about Humphrey of all in the first place Johnson had to give up the presidency he had to say I will not run again he didn't say because I've made a mess of a Vietnam nobody said to reunite the American people behind the government and then he anointed Hubert Humphrey to be a successor and to have the nomination a man this incredible business of insisting that Hubert Humphrey run on the total support of the war in Vietnam that had already destroyed Johnson I thought extraordinary that Johnson asked him to to to run on the same Vietnam platform and I thought

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Vietnam platform and I thought extraordinary that Hubert Humphrey agreed to do so because he broke out of the traces just a little bit and his popularity began coming up but it wasn't enough to prevent the election of the Nixon you also get involved in politics with different groups and I even remember senior on television talking about running in a presidential election could you say a few words about that of how that related to some where anti-war activity well you see I've been a Liberal Democrat from the time I was in medical school until the Vietnam War began but those experiences radicalized me I realized our government and its foreign policy is more often than not aggressive that it's trying to extend the power of our armed services or trying to extend the markets of our industries in other words it's the government is not working as much for the welfare of the American people as it's working for the for industry and for its own their power so I became a radical and and I became a socialist and then in 1971 a number of small socialist groups in different parts of the country most notably that Peace and Freedom Party and California got together there were about 10 or 12 local parties there was one in Texas Florida there was the Wright's party in Michigan there was the party in Washington DC the state's rights party in Washington DC they all got together decided to be an association and then to form a National Party and run a national candidate and I was the candidate people say why did you run I didn't particularly want to run I mean it was not my picture of myself but there was a great

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there was a great there was a strong sentiment obviously because I was well-known and a party that doesn't have any members to start with and it doesn't have any money to start with and it doesn't have any prospect of getting any money it needs something so they wanted a candidate who was known so I consented it was very educational we got about 80,000 votes but we'd only gotten on the ballot in ten states it's called the People's Party I campaigned all over the United States at my office this was 72 72 campaign and I had good-sized audience as usually at universities one of the things I realized was how far Americans are from really considering socialism in fact as you know most Americans are scared to death of the word socialism it immediately conjures up pictures of secret police and destruction of churches and trying to would conquer the world cause all that socialism means is producing things for the benefit of people rather than for profit and I think it's a perfectly reasonable and agile philosophy and our party was strongly Democratic in the sense that we believed it should be brought in through the democratic process and that it must stay democratic be controlled by the people after it was in I speak to an enthusiastic audience and then always you know dozen people come up on the platform and one of the things that I've been talking about the whole

hour of talk and a whole hour of answering questions was don't worry about whether you're voting but Democrats or Republicans both of them are controlled by industry the personalities are different Nixon is different from McGovern but the policies

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different from McGovern but the policies that you'll get will be exactly the same always one of the people who goes up on the platform this happened every single night for a year and was terribly discouraging the repetition they say great speech you've got me convinced we've gotta have a different economic system but of course I can't vote for you because I wouldn't want to waste my vote in two hours and have it absolutely clear that he's missed the point altogether of course what really is that what it really amounts to is especially with undergraduates they're pretty strongly identified with the system and though there may be a little recession here or a big depression there I think they in general in America have confidence that they're going to be able to make out all right I think it's simply a statement socialism sounds fair sounds sort of nice but don't ask me to give up my stake in the present economy because I expect to do quite well well they always they said to you and a lot of people during the 60s and early 70s now you got to work within the system dr. Spock but don't go outside the system but is it even possible to work within the system and make any meaningful change well I think that the power is of course all on the part of the establishment and on the part of industry and on the part of the government and that people who have any strong protest have an uphill fight it certainly was an uphill fight to try to win a majority of the American people over to opposition to the war in Vietnam though it was it was done in the end I always worked within the system I wrote letters to every politician that represent me I participated in political campaigns always voted I wrote letters to the paper I went to peaceful demonstrations but I think if after you

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demonstrations but I think if after you find that the press is paying no attention to you which is true I mean you could have maybe one demonstration that was peaceful the press would report it but after you've had that third or the fourth or the fifth they get bored they say that's not news that a few thousand people are shuffling around the White House again there's no question about it but civil disobedience dramatizes your opposition it's saying I feel so strongly that the government is wrong that I'm willing to go to jail if necessary in order to make this point and you do reach people that way so the press suddenly pays attention lasts just a year ago I and my wife and about ten of the people from the health professions demonstrated at the White House we knelt down on the White House lawn to pray and that's against the law and we were protesting against cuts in health services by the Reagan administration and of course we were immediately arrested but there were both Washington papers had half a page on it with pictures and Newsweek magazine had a quarter of a page on it I I wouldn't do it foolishly who in a foolhardy way but there's no question that it's a way of bringing the issue to the people dr. sparke in your travels particularly in the last 10 years when you've been working with these anti-nuclear groups and other political groups you see more of a consciousness that the political problems of America are not just single issue issues like for instance and in the Vietnam War ending nuclear energy but there's more radical systemic changes that need to be brought about do you think more and more people are beginning to see this well most of these political groups just focused on this one issue well I think the traditional parties are get concerned about relatively secondary

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get concerned about relatively secondary issues like should you should you decrease the budget or should you increase the budget and things like that my feeling is of course that they very fundamental changes have got to be made that we've got to have a less competitive more cooperative society and I think there's a growing number of people who feel that way but what discourages me is that we have to have either a terrible war like the war in Vietnam to make the American people wake up that something fundamental is wrong or we have to have an administration like the Reagan administration that is getting into what I call an insane acceleration of the arms race and hurting the American people especially poor people disadvantaged

people by cutting down on health services cutting down on educational services welfare services housing all the things that I think are important for people are being being impaired and well it's too bad that you have to have a war in Vietnam or a policy as drastically wrong as I considered Reagan's a policy before any substantial number of people wake up and at least wake up enough to become active in anyway I think we've got some kind of a tradition in this country of indifference to the political process I think a lot of Americans say listen politics is a dirty business don't pay any attention your job is to go out and get a good job and get ahead in the world no I think everybody's job is to get a good job I also think that everything's got to be argued on the political stage also you see a third party as the vehicle for the sort of change that you're talking about are there any third parties like the Citizens party today that you're impressed with well I think sooner or later from my point of view that's got

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later from my point of view that's got to be a strong a third party and a people lot to the left end of the spectrum I've got to get together behind it but I don't see any and but the number are increasing but I don't think that it's a very substantial number yet I have hopes and I'll continue to work work work as long as I can stay upright I'll keep on working but change and that brings us to the end of this alternative views frequently hear from viewers who request a list of news publications which we use on alternative views and also a reading list for a u.s. power structure in the mass media if you would like to have these send a stamped self-addressed envelope to the alternative Information Network p.o box 70 to 79 austin texas seven eight seven one three you must send a self-addressed stamped envelope there are a lot of people we need to thank for helping with the production making it possible Kevin West was the camera person for our news David Gallo stitch was the director of the interview Marc zoo felt was the one who set up the interview with dr. Spock and produced it bill Crawford was a sound man Roxanne elder of the mobilization for survival made the arrangements with dr. Spock alternative views is a production of the alternative Information Network peel box 7 to 17 Austin Texas 7 8 7 1 3 goodbye

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